

# **THE STORIES OF EL DORADO**

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The stories of El Dorado by Frona Eunice Wait

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**FRONA EUNICE WAIT**

**THE STORIES  
OF EL DORADO**



THE  
Stories of El Dorado

BY

FRONA EUNICE WAIT

Colburn,

1904



Happiness is found only in El Dorado, which no  
one yet has been able to reach.

—Spanish Proverb



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*This book is dedicated to dear little Jack  
Morgan Gillespie, with the most affectionate  
and sincere regards of his devoted friend,*

*FROM EUNICE WAIT*

44762

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## Preface

"It has only recently been recognized as a fact," says Prof. A. F. Bandelier, "*that on the whole American continent, the mode of life of the primitive inhabitants was formed on one sociological principle, and consequently the culture of these peoples has varied, locally, only in degree, not in kind.* The religious principles were fundamentally the same among the Sioux and the Brazilians, and physical causes more than anything else have been at the bottom of the local differences." Such has been my own experience in studying the stories of El Dorado which form the subject of this book, and in presenting a man—a culture hero—who came by sea from the East, I am justified by a more complete set of records than is known to the superficial student. As this man's principles of life were the same, we are forced to the conclusion that all the heroes were one conception, handed down by oral tradition, but widely separated as to locality, by the lapse of time, by migrations and commercial relations of the different tribes.

As to where these myths originated, or how old they are, I have nothing to suggest, since in presenting these simple variants, it is no concern of mine. It is sufficient for my purpose to know that they exist. To me they lend a dignity to our country by investing it with a misty past, replete with a mythology as rich and sublime as that of any of the races of antiquity. Not only will the study of

TAYLOR COL. AUG. 1940

them inspire patriotism and make us better acquainted with the inner lives of the red men, but it will tend to create an interest in our sister republics which cannot fail to be of lasting practical benefit. We know much more of Europeans than we do of the peoples of this continent.

If mythology is to be taught in the schools at all, surely our own should have consideration, and in familiarizing ourselves with the traditions of El Dorado, we shall have one more incentive for higher living. We shall learn that the great souls of the races that have preceded us, in the Americas, have faced the same problems of life, which are the heritage of our common humanity; that within its dark shadows they too have struggled, hoped, and prayed.

No words incorporated into the English language have been fraught with such *stupendous consequences* as El Dorado. When the padres attempted to tell the story of the Christ, the natives exclaimed "El Dorado," or what the imperfect translations have made El Dorado—the golden. As the ignorant sailors and adventurers had been kept from mutiny by Columbus' promise of gold, it is no wonder that they seized upon the literal meaning instead of the spiritual one.

The time, being that of Don Quixote and of the Inquisition, accounts for the childish credulity on one side and the unparalleled ferocity on the other. The search for El Dorado, whether it was believed to be a fabulous country of gold, or an



inaccessible mountain, or a lake, or a city, or a priest who anointed himself with a fragrant oil and sprinkled his body with fine gold dust, must always remain one of the blackest pages in the history of the white race. The great heart of humanity will ever ache with sympathy for the melancholy and pitiful end of the natives, who at the time of the conquest of Mexico were confidently expecting the return of the mild and gentle Quetzalcoatl, the Mexican variant of this universal myth. None of the cruelties attributed to the Indian had its origin in resistance to the acceptance of a new faith. On the contrary he fought solely in defense of his home, and from Patagonia to Alaska was always willing to listen to the Christian ideas of God and the hereafter.

I have devoted the first seven variants to the original myth, while the others pertain to the transitions to, and misconceptions of, the name El Dorado. A lust for gold acquired by conquest was the underlying motive of the discoveries and explorations made in the western hemisphere, and is the beginning of all American history. We have unconsciously added some variants to it in California, where the mythical kingdom of Quivera became the land of gold of the '49 epoch. El Dorado has long been a household word for anything rich and golden.

I begin by bringing the Golden Hearted from an island in the east, the Tlapalla, from whence he came, and to which he returned in the legend. In

all variants he gave a distinct promise of return. This accounts for the awe inspired by Europeans in the minds of the natives, causing them everywhere to fall easy victims to the unscrupulous adventurers swarming into their country. That there should have been confusion seems unavoidable under the circumstances, but certainly Fate never played a more cruel prank than to have one race of men speak and act constantly from the standpoint of tradition and religious belief, while the other thought solely of material gain.

Only in *Hiawatha* and the *Pueblo Montezuma* have I taken liberty with the original. The former is based on the recent researches into Algonquin and Chippewa myths of Michabo, the great White Hare. In the *Pueblo Montezuma* I have followed Prof. Bandelier as to the latest conceptions of the Wrathful Chieftain. My authority for making the Amazon Queens degenerate priestesses of the sun, is J. A. Von Heuvel, the defender of Sir Walter Raleigh's connection with the South American version of the El Dorado legend. To Hubert Howe Bancroft's abridgement of Father Sahagan's translation of the *Popol Vuh* am I much indebted.

In all accessories I have utilized the products or characteristics of localities visited by the mythical hero, but have avoided investing him with a religious character or surrounding him with supernatural phenomena. It will be wise to make a distinction between the purely mythical, and that which led to history.

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